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ONLY 2 MILLION PEOPLE TOOK DOMESTIC FLIGHTS IN JULY

A total of 21.07 lakh people took domestic flights in July this year, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation said

COVID OUTBREAK HIT LOAD FACTOR: DGCA

According to the DGCA, the number of passengers who flew on domestic flights in July this year was 82.3 per cent lower than the corresponding period last year. "The passenger load factor in the month of July 2020 has shown a sharp decline due to limited air operations because of Covid-19 outbreak," the civil aviation regulator said

CARRIERS SEE <60% OCCUPANCY IN JUNE

- The occupancy rate for five out of the six major Indian airlines stood around 50-60% in June this year
- SpiceJet, however, witnessed highest occupancy at 70% in July
- Meanwhile, other carriers, including IndiGo, GoAir, Vistara, AirAsia India and Air India, saw only 45-60% occupancy

45%

MAXIMUM OF PRE-COVID DOMESTIC FLIGHTS THAT AIRLINES CAN OPERATE

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SDPI ROLE IN RIOTS UNDER LENS, 7 FIRs FILED

Central Crime Branch takes up case, police scour through CCTV footage from the affected areas to identify culprits, assess damage

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

THE Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) is now under the scanner over its suspected involvement in Tuesday night's riots in Kaval Byrasandra area of Bengaluru. Karnataka Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Thursday said the organisation's role in the mob violence will be thoroughly investigated. The case has been handed over to the Central Crime Branch (CCB) and three special teams have been formed to nab those still at large.

With seven more arrests on Thursday, the total number touched 200. The police have arrested SDPI's Bengaluru district secretary Muzammil Pasha, a resident of the area, in connection with the arson and riot which claimed three lives in police firing, and also saw the burning of several vehicles and Pulakeshinagar MLA Akhanda Srinivasa Murthy and his neighbours' houses. They have registered seven FIRs in Devarajeevanahalli and Kadugondanahalli police stations -- which were attacked by the mobs on Tuesday night -- naming 22 accused. The police said they have identified nine among them to be SDPI members, but have not disclosed their names.

According to eyewitnesses, the mob came prepared to attack the MLA's house and the DJ Halli police station. Senior police officers visited the spot on Thursday and analysed footage from about 200 CCTV cameras to identify the accused. The police on Thursday produced some of the prime accused before a magistrate to take them into their custody..

One of the FIRs is against P Naveen, the nephew of MLA Srinivasa Murthy. Naveen, who has since been arrested, allegedly put up a blasphemous post on social media, triggering Tuesday night's violence in which 19 people, including three media persons and 14 policemen, sustained injuries. He faces charges under two Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections pertaining to fostering enmity among communities and outraging religious feelings.

Meanwhile, former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda said, "How many among them (accused of rioting) are real culprits? All of them cannot be culprits. The innocent should not be punished, this is my request to the police."

How many among them (accused of rioting) are real culprits? All of them cannot be culprits. Only the guilty should be held responsible for the incident and merciless action should be taken against them.

H D Deve Gowda, Ex-PM

MLA, family visit house

MLA Akhanda Srinivasa Murthy visited his house on Thursday, accompanied by family members, who broke down on seeing its condition.

INSIDE

RESIDENTS RECALL TUESDAY NIGHTMARE | P2

IT SUITS BJP GOVT TO NOT BAN SDPI, SAYS REDDY | P3

POLICE LOOKING INTO LARGER CONSPIRACY | P3

Forensic experts collect spent cartridges from the DJ Halli police station premises in Bengaluru on Thursday after violence rocked the area two nights ago | VINOD KUMAR

SDPI flag found on statue of saint

An SDPI flag was found on a mantap bearing the statue of saint-philosopher Shankaracharya in Sringeri town on Thursday. It is suspected that the flag was placed on Wednesday night when it was raining. Devotees staged a protest on Thursday and demanded that the culprits be arrested immediately. Reacting to the incident, Kannada and Culture Minister C T Ravi tweeted that he had directed the Superintendent of Police to take action against the culprits. Chikkamagaluru SP Hakay Akshay Machindra also said that an FIR has been registered. P7

'Mobsters were outsiders, MLA our Anna'

BALA CHAUHAN @Bengaluru

FAMILY feud and an alleged conspiracy to sabotage the career of the Pulakeshi Nagar Congress MLA Akhanda Srinivasa Murthy by his party rivals and the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) are emerging as the possible reasons behind the burning down of his house, said sources.

The Tuesday attack on the DJ Halli police station and the MLA's house in Kaval Byrasandra was led by "outsiders", say residents of Devarajeevanahalli (DJ Halli,) who are yet to recover from the shock of the violence. "There were outsiders in the mob, who gathered before the DJ Halli police station within no time and damaged it. They burnt down Anna's house. He is like a family member to a majority of the people in this area," said Munna, a DJ Halli resident.

"We are supporters of 'Anna'. How can we think of harming him?" asked cable operator Fairoz of Devara Jeevana Halli.

"Anna is a very popular politician. He does not differentiate between people on religion or financial status. We have always voted for him even when he was with the JD(S). We vote for Anna and not the party he represents," said Fairoz.

"On every Eid he stands at the Tannery Road Circle and wishes everyone. On Ganesha (Chaturthi) and St Mary's feast, you can find him walking inside the narrow lanes, greeting people," he said. P2

TRAVEL EASED

H-1B holders can return to US to resume their jobs

PUSHKAR BANAKAR @ New Delhi

THOSE who hold H-1B visas can now enter the US to resume their jobs, a move that will bring cheer to thousands of Indian professionals. They can travel with their spouses and children/dependents.

The H-1B visa-holders whose travel is supported by a request from a US government agency can also enter the US. These are the major highlights of the relaxations announced by US President Donald Trump on Thursday, diluting an earlier order banning the entry of H-1B workers to the US till the end of the year.

Trump's June 22 order had sparked panic among H-1B holders stuck outside the US due to Covid, especially those whose visas were up for renewal.

According to Harinder Sekhon, an expert on India-US relations, the US has been forced to relax norms as it needs trained manpower to revive its economy. According to her, Trump has not offered any new concession; the blanket ban has been only relaxed a bit.

Gehlot plans trust vote to counter BJP move

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot (left) and senior Congress leader Sachin Pilot flash victory signs during a party MLAs' meeting, at the CM's residence in Jaipur on Thursday | PTI

RAJESH ASNANI @ Jaipur

HOURS after the BJP said, it will move a no-trust motion against the Ashok Gehlot Government on Friday, the Rajasthan Congress Legislature Party (CLP) at its meeting on Thursday evening decided to checkmate the saffron party with its own confidence motion.

Sachin Pilot, who had led a rebellion against CM Gehlot ostensibly seeking a change of guard, also attended the CLP meeting, chaired by the CM. This was the first Gehlot-Pilot truce meeting of sorts, since their apparent rivalry came into the open, triggering a political crisis in the state. There were smiles all around as both leaders shook hands to present a united front.

Before the CLP meet, the Congress had revoked the suspension of MLAs Vishvendra Singh and Bhanwarlal Sharma. Both were suspended from the party's primary membership last month over their alleged involvement in a conspiracy to topple the Gehlot government. According to political observers, the Gehlot government is no longer in danger after Pilot's return to the Congress fold.

Earlier, speaking to reporters in Jaipur, Opposition Leader Gulab Singh Kataria said, "We will move a no-trust motion and our party is fully ready for this. We plan to question how the government functioned during the past one month when all its MLAs and ministers were herded together in hotels."

The decision to push for a no-trust motion was taken at a BJP legislature party meeting on Thursday. Most senior leaders of the party state unit attended the meeting, which was presided over by Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar. Notably, former CM Vasundhara Raje, who had been camping in Delhi was also present in the meeting.

With the BJP's no-trust motion and the Congress' confidence motion slated for Friday, the first day of the Assembly session may be stormy. P10

EXPRESS READ

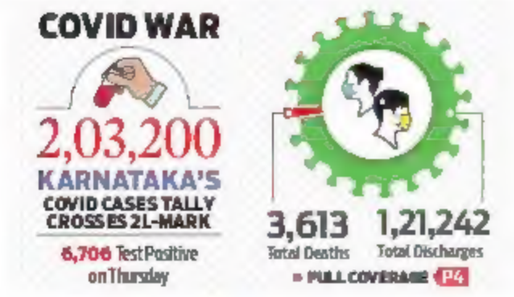
UAE, Israel diplomatic ties normalise under deal brokered by Trump

Dubai/Washington: The UAE and Israel on Thursday agreed to establish full diplomatic relations in a deal brokered by US President Donald Trump, a breakthrough that the three nations say will advance peace in the Middle East | P11

Zydus Cadila launches generic version of Remdesivir at ₹2,800 per vial in India

New Delhi: Drug firm Zydus Cadila on Thursday said it has launched a generic version of Remdesivir, branded as Remdac, used for treating patients suffering from severe Covid-19 symptoms, at Rs 2,800 per 100 mg vial in the Indian market | P9

WITH THIS ISSUE CITY'S BEST WEEKEND GUIDE INDULGE 30 PAGES, INCLUDING 16 OF INDULGE (TABLOID)



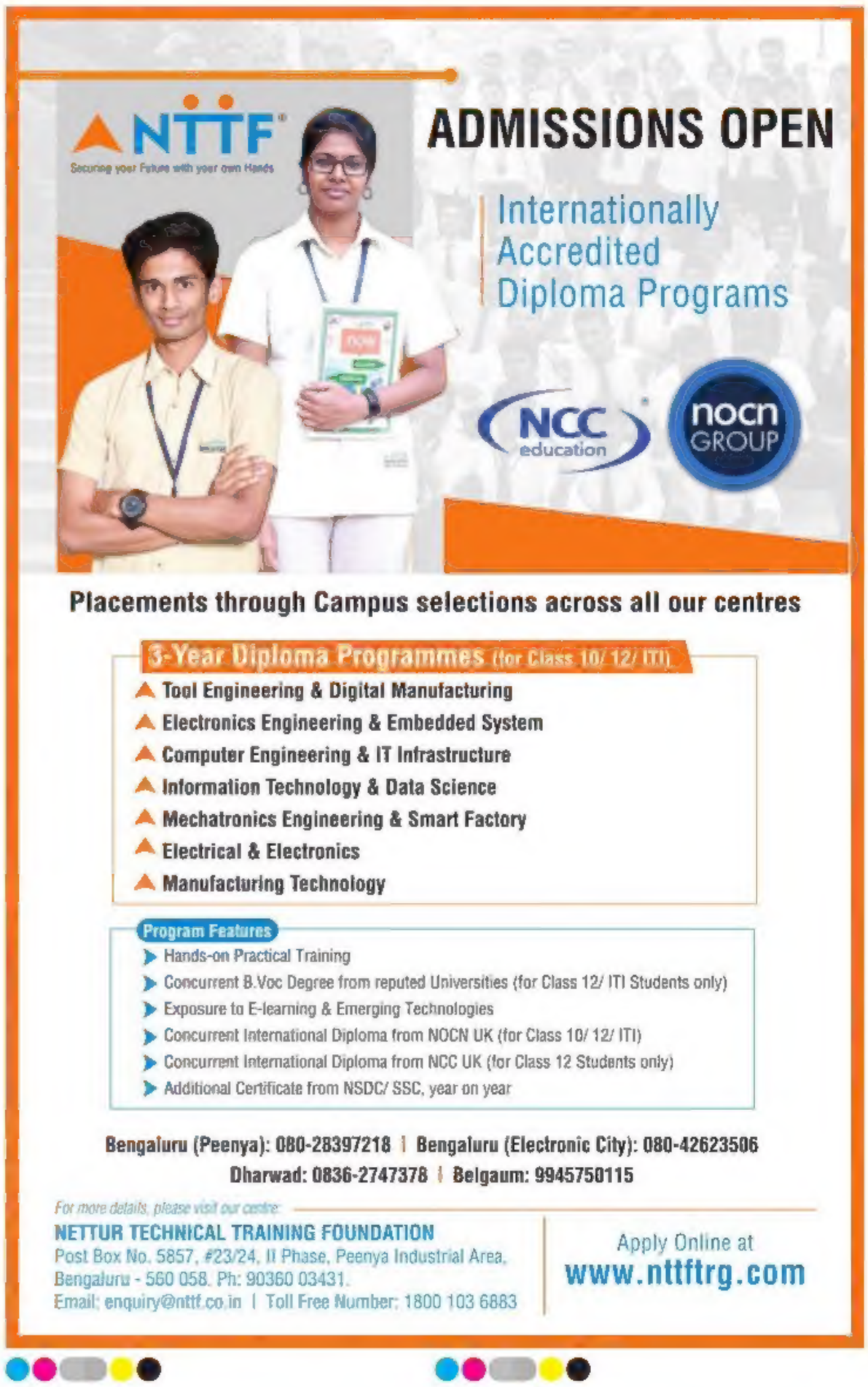
PM launches platform to ease taxpayers' worries

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

TO make honest taxpayers' lives easier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday launched a new platform comprising faceless tax assessment, faceless appeal system and a taxpayers' charter.

While the faceless assessment system and the taxpayers' charter went live on Thursday, the facility for appeals will be available from September 25. Modi said these reformist measures will instil a sense of fearlessness among taxpayers, as it eliminates corruption and harassment by officials.

Cases related to search and seizure and international tax charges don't come under this facility. P12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